

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) A hydrogel composition comprising a hydrogel polymer, which polymer is a natural or synthetic alginate, optionally hydrolyzed and/or oxidized, and which polymer is prepared using an excess amount of cross-linker having two or more functional groups capable of cross-linking the polymer such that the polymer has cross-links to other hydrogel polymer molecules and also has dangling cross-linkers with at least one functional group bound to a hydrogel polymer and at least one unbound functional group capable of reversibly cross-linking the polymer, wherein the amount of dangling cross-linkers, based on the total amount of cross-linkers bound to the polymer by at least one functional group, is from 20% to 90%.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously presented) The hydrogel composition of claim 1, wherein the amount of dangling cross-linkers is from 20% to 70%.

4. (Previously presented) The hydrogel composition of claim 1, wherein the amount of dangling cross-linkers is from 30% to 50%.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently Amended) The hydrogel composition of claim 1, wherein the hydrogel polymer is ~~a natural or synthetic alginate, optionally hydrolyzed and/or oxidized~~ an alginate which has been hydrolyzed to poly(guluronate) and oxidized to a poly(aldehyde guluronate).

7. (Currently Amended) The hydrogel composition of claim 6 1, wherein the hydrogel polymer has a weight average molecular weight of 1,000 to 50,000 dalton.

8. (Currently Amended) The hydrogel composition of claim 6 1, wherein the hydrogel polymer has a weight average molecular weight of 1,000 to 30,000 dalton.

9. (Currently Amended) The hydrogel composition of claim 6 1, wherein the hydrogel polymer has a weight average molecular weight of 1,000 to 10,000 dalton.

10. (Original) The hydrogel composition of claim 1 wherein the hydrogel polymer before cross-linking has a molecular weight such that it is at or below the renal threshold of humans.

11. (Currently Amended) The hydrogel composition of claim 5 1, wherein the cross-linker has at least two hydrazide functional groups.

12. (Currently Amended) The hydrogel composition of claim 5 1, wherein the cross-linker is adipic acid dihydrazide.

13. (Original) The hydrogel composition of claim 1, wherein the hydrogel has an initial shear modulus of 0.005 to 200 kPa.

14. (Original) The hydrogel composition of claim 1, wherein the hydrogel has an initial shear modulus of 0.05 to 100 kPa.

15. (Original) A method for tissue engineering, cell transplantation or drug delivery which comprises administering <sup>to a subject in need thereof</sup> a composition comprising a hydrogel composition of claim 1.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently Amended) The hydrogel composition of claim 1, wherein the hydrogel polymer is a synthetic ~~polymer~~ alginate.

19. - 22. (Canceled)